

Message from Kathleen Sebelius

Secretary of Health and Human Services

The enormous public health and financial impact on this nation from tobacco use is completely avoidable. Until we end tobacco use, more people will become addicted, more people will become sick, more families will be devastated by the loss of loved ones, and the nation will continue to incur damaging medical and lost productivity costs. Now is the time to fully implement the proven and effective interventions that reduce tobacco-caused death and disease and to help end this public health epidemic once and for all.

Cigarettes are responsible for approximately 443,000 deaths each year in the United States, which is one in every five deaths. The chronic diseases caused by tobacco use are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States and are an unnecessary drain on our health care system. The economic burden of cigarette use includes more than \$193 billion annually in health care costs and loss of productivity.

We can prevent the staggering toll that tobacco takes on the individual, our families, and our communities. This new Surgeon General's report focuses on cigarettes and cigarette smoke to provide further evidence on how cigarettes cause addiction and death and will further add to the robust evidence base on effective interventions for tobacco control and prevention. The report identifies key pathways of disease production and, through knowledge of these pathways, points the way to finding better approaches to cessation and prevention and should bring new directions to lowering the still too high burden of smoking-caused disease.

Twenty years of successful state efforts show that the more states invest in tobacco control programs, the greater the reductions in smoking; and the longer states maintain such programs, the greater and faster the impact. The largest impacts come when we increase tobacco prices, ban smoking in public places, offer affordable and accessible cessation treatments and services, and combine media campaigns with other initiatives. We have outlined a level of state investment in comprehensive tobacco control and prevention efforts that, if implemented, would result in an estimated five million fewer smokers over the next five years. As a result, hundreds of thousands of premature deaths caused by tobacco use would be prevented, and many fewer of the nations' children would be robbed of their aunts, uncles, parents, and grandparents. Importantly, in 2009 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration received statutory authority to regulate tobacco products. This has the potential to greatly accelerate progress in reducing morbidity and mortality from tobacco use.

Tobacco prevention and control efforts need to be commensurate with the harm caused by tobacco use, or tobacco use will remain the largest cause of preventable illness and death in our nation for decades, even though we possess the knowledge and the tools to largely eliminate it. When we help Americans quit tobacco use and prevent our youth from ever starting, we all benefit. Now is the time for comprehensive public health and regulatory approaches to tobacco control. If we seize this moment, we will make a difference in all of our communities and in the lives of generations to come.